

A People-centered Approach for Global Human Rights Progress

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Remarks by H.E. Wang Yi

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Mme.

President,

Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to speak at the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on behalf of the Chinese government.

At this moment, humanity is still in a tough battle with COVID-19. The coronavirus is our common enemy, defeating the virus is our mission, solidarity and cooperation is our only option.

The pandemic has afflicted calamitous impact on humankind. To date, COVID-19 has infected more than 100 million people, claimed over two million lives, and pushed 130 million people back into poverty. Global inequality is exacerbated, the North-South divide is widened, and the right to development is faced with new challenges.

At the same time, racism and xenophobia are re-surfacing. Disinformation and hate speech are spreading. Certain countries are obsessed with politicizing the virus and stigmatizing other nations. Legitimate demand by developing countries for vaccines is not getting adequate attention, and their need is not met.

How to promote and protect human rights in the face of these unprecedented changes around the world and this once-in-a-century pandemic? It is a big question that must be answered with deep reflection. China holds the following views.

First, we should embrace a human rights philosophy that centers on the people. The people are what human rights are all about. The people's interests are where the human rights cause starts and ends. Increasing people's sense of gains, happiness and security is the fundamental pursuit of human rights as well as the ultimate goal of national governance. The people-centered philosophy means that the people should be the real masters of their country, and that they should take part in national governance and political consultation. It also means

that the wealth gap should be narrowed, and that all-round development of the people should be promoted.

Second, we should uphold both universality and particularity of human rights. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are common values shared by all humanity and recognized by all countries. The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have set out lofty ideals and basic principles for advancing human rights. They should be observed and delivered by all countries. On the other hand, countries differ from each other in history, culture, social system and level of economic and social development. Therefore they must promote and protect human rights in light of their national realities and the needs of their people.

Third, we should systemically advance all aspects of human rights. Human rights are an all-encompassing concept. They include civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Among them, the rights to subsistence and development are the basic human rights of paramount importance. We should take coordinated, integrated and multi-pronged steps to advance all aspects of human rights in all dimensions and fields throughout the whole process. The scope of human rights is constantly evolving, and the right to health and the environmental right should also be given more prominence.

Fourth, we should continue to promote international dialogue and cooperation on human rights. Protecting and promoting human rights is a common cause for us all. Global human rights governance should be advanced through consultation among all countries. And the benefits of human rights progress should be shared by people of all countries. Human rights are not a monopoly by a small number of countries, still less should they be used as a tool to pressure other countries and meddle in their internal affairs. All countries should abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, carry out human rights exchange and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and jointly promote the sound development of the international human rights cause.

Colleagues,

This year is extremely important for China. We will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and start the new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country. Under the CPC leadership, we have embarked on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics which is widely endorsed by our people, and found the path of human rights development that suits China's national conditions and needs.

With all rural residents living below the current poverty line lifted out of poverty, we have met the target of eradicating extreme poverty set out in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development ten years ahead of schedule, thus turning into reality the Chinese nation's dream of thousands of years. It is a milestone in our human rights achievement. China's poverty eradication is not just about higher income and living standards. More important, it is also about ensuring every individual's rights to education, healthcare and housing.

China has put in place the world's largest social security system covering elderly care, healthcare, subsistence allowance and housing. With its GDP exceeding 100 trillion RMB yuan and long-term social stability, China has laid a solid foundation for advancing its human rights cause.

Faced with the sudden onslaught of COVID-19, the Chinese government has followed the people-first approach, put the safety and health of every person front and center, and made every effort to safeguard the life and dignity of the people. We also launched a global emergency humanitarian campaign, the largest of its kind since the founding of New China, to extend a helping hand to the countries and international organizations in need. It was one of our concrete steps to honor our commitment to building a global community of health for all.

Vaccines concern the rights to health, subsistence and development of the people, hence the priority of our current endeavors. Global distribution of vaccines must be fair and in particular, accessible and affordable to developing countries. As the first country that pledged to make vaccines a global public good, notwithstanding difficulties at home, China is providing free vaccines to 53 countries in need, and exporting vaccines to 22 countries who have made purchasing requests. The overwhelming majority of them are developing countries. We hope that all countries that have the capability will join hands and make due contributions.

Colleagues,

China supports more exchange and cooperation on human rights in the principle of mutual respect. But we oppose using double standards to make slanderous attacks on other countries, and we also oppose using human rights as an excuse to interfere in other countries' internal affairs.

Xinjiang-related issues are in essence about countering violent terrorism and separatism. The Xinjiang region of China has been earnestly implementing the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, drawing on similar practices of other countries and taking de-radicalization measures in accordance with law. All this is fully consistent with the principles and spirit of the

UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Thanks to the efforts of the local people of all ethnic groups, there has been no violent terrorist case for more than four years in a row in Xinjiang. The region now enjoys social stability and a sound development momentum. And the local people are living a safe and happy life. Between 2010 and 2018, the Uyghur population in Xinjiang increased by nearly 2.55 million, registering a growth rate of 25%. This is much higher than the 13.99% growth rate of the entire population in Xinjiang, and far higher than the 2% growth rate of the Han population in the region. Workers of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang can choose professions based on their own will, and enjoy labor rights and interests. Their personal freedom is never restricted. Xinjiang protects the freedom of religious belief for all ethnic groups in the region in accordance with law. There are more than 24,000 mosques in Xinjiang, and that's one mosque for every 530 Muslims on average. These basic facts show that there has never been so-called "genocide", "forced labor" or "religious oppression" in Xinjiang. Such inflammatory accusations are fabricated out of ignorance and prejudice. They are simply malicious and politically-driven hypes, and couldn't be further from the truth. The door to Xinjiang is always open. People from many countries who have visited Xinjiang have learned the facts and the truth on the ground. China also welcomes the High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Xinjiang.

The legislation on safeguarding national security in Hong Kong has plugged the long-existing legal loopholes in Hong Kong, and facilitated a major turnaround from turbulence to law and order. It is conducive to the steady and sustained implementation of the policy of One Country, Two Systems. It protects the lawful rights and freedoms that the residents of Hong Kong enjoy under the Basic Law. Nearly three million Hong Kong residents signed a petition in strong support of the legislation. Nearly 70% of the residents feel that Hong Kong is more secure and stable since the national security law took effect. All this speaks volumes about the extensive public support for the legislation. We have every confidence in the future of Hong Kong.

Mme. President,

Colleagues,

We are at the beginning of the Chinese Lunar Year of the Ox. The ox symbolizes diligence and strength, and heralds a year of harvest and hope. Let us join hands to promote and protect human rights with the people-centered approach and facilitate the building of the community with a shared future for mankind.

In conclusion, I wish this session of the UN Human Rights Council positive outcomes.

Thank you.